



Strengthening our Food and Agricultural Economy

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
EXHIBIT NO. 3
DATE 3-25-11
BILL NO. SJ19

SUPPORT SJ 19

A RESOLUTION PROMOTING "FARM TO SCHOOL" PROGRAMS IN MONTANA.

What is "Farm to School"?

"Farm to School" programs connect schools (K-12) and local farms and ranches in order to serve fresh and healthy Montana grown foods in school cafeterias and provide experiential agriculture, health, and nutrition education opportunities to students.

Why is "Farm to School" important to Montanans?

- **Supports Children's Health:** Childhood obesity and associated chronic diseases are significant problems in Montana and nationally, and increased consumption of fresh and nutritious foods is a proven effective way to combat these problems.
- **Teaches Children about Food and Agriculture:** "Farm to School" programs facilitate experiential education about food and nutrition, and helps students understand why local agriculture is valuable.
- **Supports Farmers, Ranchers, and Rural Communities:** "Farm to School" programs purchase local foods for school meals and provide a viable and stable market for local agricultural producers. These markets help to bring economic development opportunities to Montana's agricultural communities.

What will this "Farm to School" resolution do?

This legislation is a mechanism for recognizing "Farm to School" programs as an effective strategy for combating childhood obesity, improving child health, and local economic development, and encourages Montanans to take action in developing and supporting these programs.

1. This resolution encourages Montanans to recognize the first week of October as "**Montana Farm to School Week**", and to engage in promotional activities that bring further visibility and development to these programs.
2. This resolution recognizes "Farm to School" as programs that both purchase agricultural products from local farmers **and** educates students about making healthy food and nutrition choices and understanding why local agriculture is valuable.



For more information, please contact:
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What activities could take place as part of "Montana Farm to School Week"?

- **Parents, teachers, students, and citizen groups could...** *collaborate to organize events such as a "Montana Meal Day" or the installation of a garden on school grounds. Or, they could arrange for educational interactions between students and farmers such as field trips to farms and in-class presentations by local farmers or farm organizations.*
- **Foodservice Directors and school administrators could...** *use "Montana Farm to School Week" as an impetus to identify local farmers and food businesses to purchase from and open a dialogue with them, or begin integrating just one (or many) local products into their regular menu.*
- **Farmers and ranchers could...** *visit the school cafeteria during a mealtime when their product is being featured to answer questions and "share the story" of their farm and farm products with students.*
- **The Montana Office of Public Instruction could...** *continue to provide outreach and training to school districts, parent and teacher organizations, and school foodservice directors regarding the importance of and procedures for incorporation Montana foods into the cafeteria menus, and the resources available for Farm to School curriculum.*
- **The Montana Department of Agriculture could...** *provide outreach and guidance to farmers regarding the benefits of and procedures for selling their products directly to schools.*

Why is it important that Farm to School include both local food purchasing and local food education?

In order to be effective, "Farm to School" programs must integrate purchasing and eating healthy Montana foods with experiential education about where that food comes from. If a school emphasizes purchasing and serving local foods over hands-on education about that food, or vice versa, the benefits of these programs are not fully realized. **"Farm to School" is only partially about substituting conventional food products with Montana food products; it is also about teaching students where their food comes from and how to make healthy food choices.** Integrating local food purchasing and education ensures that "Farm to School" programs in Montana remain as pro-agriculture, and nutrition education programs.

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